116, 164

"The same writer [KS: La Billardière] bears witness to the good general health enjoyed by these savages. Thus (II. ch. x. p. 47): 'I imagined that these people passing most of their nights in the open air, in a climate of which the temperature is so variable, must have been subject to violent inflammations of the eyes; yet all of them appeared to have their sight very good except one who had a cataract,' and (ch. xi. p. 77), 'We did not see a single person who had the least trace of any disease of the skin.' If the state of a person's teeth may be taken as a standard of health, then La Billardière's evidence is still more emphatic. 'We did not see one among them [forty-two natives] in whom a single tooth of the upper jaw was wanting; indeed, they had all very good teeth' (ch. x. p. 39). On the other hand, he remarks that their mode of life exposed them to wounds. 'These savages, going completely naked, are liable to wound themselves, particularly in the lower extremities, when they pass through the woods. We observed one, who walked with difficulty, and one of whose feet was wrapped up in a piece of skin' (ibid.)."

1: Roth--21-22
116, 164

(No date) 1890

Tasmanians

"Widowson (p. 192), writing after the settlement of the Europeans had taken [22] place, says: 'These people are subject to a disease which causes the most loathsome ulcerated sores.... It is occasioned by a filthy mode of life.... Their having no means of procuring vegetables, besides being constantly exposed to the weather, together with their offensive habits of living, produce the disease above mentioned, with its fatal consequences.' But this sweeping statement must be taken with reservations, for in the chapter on Food it will be seen that vegetables and fruits formed a large portion of their sustenance."

1: Roth--22 (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 132, 164

"Backhouse, who visited these people as early as 1832, mentions (p. 105) that the inhabitants on the west coast had scars which 'appeared to have proceeded from irregular surgical cuts, and were principally upon the chest, which is very likely to be affected by inflammation, that often speedily issues death. A large proportion of these people died from this cause, in the course of the late inclement season.' Davies also refers (p. 417) to the prevalence of disease of the lungs: 'Pulmonary complaints appear to be by far the most prevalent, particularly rapid inflammation of the lungs. Rheumatism is said to be common amongst them, as is likewise face-ache. They all suffer more or less from scabby sores. In the children these are dreadful, and disgusting in the extreme; with them all parts of the body are affected: with the adults the sores are more confined to the head: these are doubtless caused by their coarse living, aided by their dirty habits.' In contrast to their habits as mentioned above by Marion and La Billardière, he says (p. 415): 'The aborigines ... cannot ... bear constant exposure to bad weather; when such sets in, they will cower round their fires, under the lee of their break-winds, ... until a change takes place.'"

"Calder, who has gone more fully into the particulars of their illnesses, writes as follows (Journ. pp. 14, 15): 'Their rapid declension after the colony was founded is traceable, as far as our proofs allow us to judge, to the prevalence of epidemic disorders.... The naked savage soon discovered the comforts of clothing, and such things as blankets and clothing were often given them by the settlers; ... but ... he often kept his prize no longer than it suited the idle habits of the wanderer to carry it. Hence he was wrapped up like a mummy one week, and was as naked as a new-born infant the next. The climate of Tasmania is a variable one, ...there are very rapid changes of temperature, from moderate heat to coolness.... Now any person, whether savage or civilized, who wraps up at one time, and goes perfectly naked at another, exposed to any frequent changes of temperature, ... is [23] assuredly laying the foundation of fatal consumptive complaints, from which (such was the peculiar constitution of the Tasmanian savage) almost immediate death was certain, and whenever he took cold it seems to have settled on his lungs from the first.... Robinson says "they are universally susceptible of cold, and unless the utmost providence is taken to check its progress at an early period, it fixes itself on the lungs, and gradually assumes the complaint spoken of, i.e. the Catarral Fever"(Report May 24,1831). Again he says: "The number of aboriginals along the Western Coast has been considerably reduced since the time of my first visit [1830]; a mortality has raged amongst them, which,... with other causes, has rendered their numbers very inconsiderable (July 29, 1832)."'"

1: Roth--75-76 (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 164, 304, 757

"According to Calder, Robinson says: '... The savage of Tasmania was more than ordinarily liable to attacks (of epidemic disease), which ... he knew no remedy for, and sought only to relieve his pain by ... the excessive laceration of his body with flint, or glass if he could get it, which, by producing weakness, made death only the more speedy and certain. I quite believe that the original cause of their decay lay in their own imprudence generating fatal catarrhal complaints, from which ... by proper remedial measures, resorted to early, (they) would have recovered. These imprudences were ... practised only by a few tribes inhabiting the settled districts, but the consequences, which are epidemic, infected all before long' (Journ. p. 15). Robinson also relates of a sick woman who was afflicted, according [76] to her husband, with sick head, breast, belly. On each of these parts incisions had been made with a piece of glass bottle. The forehead was much lacerated, the blood streaming down her face. Her whole frame was wasted; she had a ghastly appearance' (Calder, Journ. p. 16)."

"La Billardière remarks (II. ch. x. p. 57): 'One of the savages has several marks of very recent burns on his head. Perhaps they employ the actual cautery in many diseases.' Holman says much the same (IV. ch. xii. p. 405): 'Bleeding by scarification is a mode of treatment in general use among them, in cases of sickness.' West records (II. p. 90) that 'they suffered from several diseases which were often fatal. Rheumatism and inflammation were cured by incisions; the loathsome eruption, called the native leprosy, they relieved by wallowing in ashes: the catarrh was very destructive, in certain seasons .... Their surgery was simple: they cut gashes with crystal.' Dove's (pp. 252-3) evidence is similar. Backhouse, noticing that the inhabitants of the west coast did not mark their bodies with the same regularity as those on the east, considered that the scars upon those on the west coast appeared to have proceeded from irregular surgical cuts, and were principally upon the chest' (p. 105)."

1: Roth--77-78 (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 164, 755

"From Backhouse we have the following accounts: 'An eruptive disease prevailed among the aborigines at this period: it was attended with fever for about four days, and was supposed to have arisen from feeding too freely on young mutton-birds. One of the men suffering under it, and covered with sores as large as a shilling, lay by a fire, and was literally wallowing in ashes, having covered himself with them from head to foot. This, we were informed, was one of their common remedies' (p. 90). He also mentions (p. 103) meeting a woman who was the last of the tribe, and 'on inquiring what killed them all, an aged man, one of their doctors, replied, "The devil." I desired to know how he managed. The woman began to cough violently, to show me how they were affected. The old doctor is affected with fits of spasmodic contraction of the muscles of one breast, which he attributes, as they do all other diseases, to the devil; and he is cunning enough to avail himself of the singular effect produced upon him by this malady, to impose upon his country people, under the idea of [78] Satanic inspiration. The doctor had his instruments lying by him, consisting of pieces of broken glass; with these he cuts deep gashes in any part affected with pain.' And Backhouse ends up this subject with: 'Lately one of the women died. The men formed a pile of logs, and at sunset, placed the body of the woman upon it. They then placed their sick people around it, and at a short distance. On A. Cottrell inquiring the reason of this, they told him that the dead woman would come in the night and take the devil out of them' (p. 105)."